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Oakland 1979

"Maybe I'm a dreamer . . . but I believe that people really do have power."

Eldridge Gonaway



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City of Oakland
Office of Community Development
October 1979

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"When you feel good about your neighborhood and you feel good about what you're doing, you feel good about yourself. And this is what is happening. The bottom line though, is that we were forced into this position."

"We didn't get what we got sittin' down."

"but the people here have always been fighters for what they want. If they want it, they go to the City Council and they yell and they give them heck."

"I feel the big shots are getting the Lord's piece of the pie, and I feel that the little folks just have a few crumbs."

"I love Oakland, but there are many things that should be changed. But you can't change anything running away from it. There is a battle to be won. And a quitter never wins, and a winner never quits."

"We're making it so inviting that people who left are trying to get back here to live."

Oakland 1979

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In his letter on the following page, Eldridge Gonaway, while Director of the Office of Community Development, dedicated this booklet to the residents of the seven Community Development districts. His untimely and unexpected death on August 5, 1979 came as a shock to all Oakland citizens.

On behalf of the people of Oakland, this booklet is now dedicated in turn to Eldridge Gonaway, whose spirit, energy, and optimism spearheaded the cause of citizen involvement in the redevelopment of the City of Oakland. It was his hope that this booklet would create still another opportunity for Oaklanders in the seven CD districts to share with each other the spirit of dialogue, constructive criticism and self-development.

We thank you, Eldridge, for your leadership, concern and the years of dedicated service to the people of Oakland.



Dedication: St. Patrick's Church Children's Center, 84th Avenue block party



Community Development Districts

August 1, 1979

Dear Residents of Oakland:

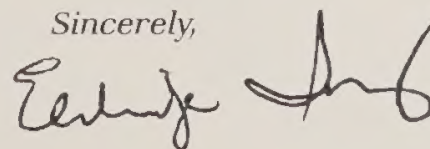
It is with pride that the Office of Community Development shares with you comments made by your fellow residents on their impressions of Oakland as a city, the programs and operation of OCD, and their desire to be participants in bringing about change. This booklet shares with you the expressions of many people as they reflect upon the positive and negative aspects of Community Development.

Without the involvement of all of you, the programs that are working well would not be successful. It is always difficult to know whether or not all of our programs are reaching all of the people. We sincerely hope that through this publication as well as your attendance at meetings, that you will participate and become more knowledgeable about Community Development.

The dedication and commitment of the Community Development Advisory Commission and the seven District Chairpersons have been of immeasurable benefit and assistance to staff. It is befitting that I personally thank the Commission, headed by Mrs. Lillian Q. Love, and members Sam Caponio, Reverend Herbert Guice, Herb Eng, and James Webster for their tireless efforts. Those members who were with us during the beginning years of Community Development — Paul Brom and Maria Estrada — are also to be commended.

Oakland is in its renaissance. Within the coming years it is staff's desire to continue to serve the people of Oakland through its Community Development Programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Eldridge Gonaway', written in a cursive style.

ELDRIDGE GONAWAY
Director



4-1-5 Society



Anti Weber demonstration



Oakland Community Organizations Convention

Introduction

This booklet is about Oakland — its culture and its people. Oakland is a city with a unique sense of community. What helps make this community of people, neighborhoods, and organizations will unfold on the following pages.

Oakland is often overlooked when surveying cities in the Bay Area. This is understandable for Oakland is a community of people who struggle to make their neighborhoods vital for their own use rather than elegant for passing tourists. Oakland has developed a unique role in the metropolitan region because its people have created a cultural diversity and richness spawned by the realities and necessities of their daily lives. The City of Oakland possesses the exciting history of an industrial and harbor city that has maintained a human architectural

scale, many parks, lakes, and an ethnic and economic variety among its people. It is the people of Oakland and the real culture which they have proudly developed that are the subjects of this small booklet.

The people of Oakland have created an important culture, rich in familiar, yet unique forms; exposed through everyday life rather than pretentious institutions; developed out of necessity rather than useless display. It is a culture developed to cope with economic scarcity rather than to induce artificial consumption.

The seven Community Development Districts, which comprise 70% of the land mass of the city and 80% of its population, form a community which is created and recreated daily by its residents. It is a home-made community for which its residents bear responsibility as well as pride. In spite of the basic problems of survival, the people of these districts are determined to produce a culture as well as a community. But until the survival problems are totally eliminated, people cannot invest their full human potential into the creation of their culture. It is for this reason that the Office of Community Develop-

ment has injected itself into this organic process of community self-determination.

In order to coordinate citizen input, the city government organized the low and moderate income neighborhoods into seven geographic districts. Each has a board composed of and elected by local concerned citizens. These boards recommend projects for their areas to the Community Development Advisory Commission, whose members — community leaders — are appointed by the Mayor. The Office of Community Development, often referred to as OCD, is the department within the City of Oakland which administers those programs, projects, and policies recommended by the individual district boards. It also channels funds coming from the Federal Office of Housing and Urban Development for such projects.

This booklet, produced through the support of the Office of Community Development is an attempt to expose the satisfactions and the frustrations of Oakland residents as they participate in the rejuvenation and rehabilitation of their neighborhoods and their city with the aid of OCD. This booklet is also a symbol of OCD's ap-



Arbor Day celebration



St. Patrick's Day Parade



Neighborhood meeting

preciation and respect for the people of the seven Community Development Districts for their dedicated efforts to improve their own neighborhoods. These neighborhoods and the people who are building them have not yet received appropriate attention for their efforts. Often times these people who are economically at survival levels are willing to release their after-employment time and energy for activities that offer no salary. It is a never ending source of wonderment as to why and how people manage to produce the intense and rich culture of Oakland's everyday life. Queries as to why residents become and remain involved in their community were answered in many ways:

"I began to see deterioration and that made me feel I had to have a stronger commitment."

"I identified with my neighborhood."

"The incentive to get involved is . . . it's my neighborhood and if I want to see it turn into one great big McDonald's Hamburger place or a strip development, all I've got to do is just keep my head down."

"I got concerned about what was going on, went to the City and wanted to know when or if they could fix our streets because they had never been paved in all the years I'd been here."

"I'd heard so many complaints why this area wasn't getting its fair share of the money. . . . Well, I decided I would miss a few meetings at church and other places, and go myself and see for myself. I am like the saying that my mother used to quote, 'I'm like blind Tom — I crave sight.' I want to see it and I want to know it myself."

"There were so many houses with absentee landlords and so the neighbors organized. . . . We wanted them to fix up their houses. . . . I became involved then and I'm still fighting for our neighborhood."

"I'm still fighting after 21 years because I really feel there's hope."

"You have got to get social responsibility to the people. People have to become involved. And it starts at the level of all

people who purports themselves to be leaders. If they work 40 hours a week they should set the example; they should be there after they get off. A leader isn't someone who's put in that position. It's a person who lives among the people, works among the people."

Trying to capture in image and words the *spirit* of the seven Community Development Districts was a difficult but rewarding task. Only a small portion of the mounds of material gathered appear in this booklet. It would take volumes to even begin to adequately portray the quality and quantity of energy produced by the residents in their endeavors to make the City of Oakland the place they envision. Many assert that Community Development has directly and indirectly enhanced the lives of the people, but others are quick to point out that there is still a great deal



St. Patrick's Day Parade



Area workers in support of jobs



Mime

more to be done. As you will see from the comments that follow, many Oaklanders see the District Boards as forums for more than just the preparation of programs for physical improvements and the distribution of funds. I interviewed over one hundred people and more casually spoke with hundreds more, and almost every day for about one and a half years photographed the planned activities, meetings, daily rituals, spontaneous events, people and artifacts which were both obvious and obscure, both ordinary and extraordinary.

What is included here is a small sample of the enthusiasm I found all around me. It is always a difficult task to capture in still photographs an ongoing, active process. What you see here are some frozen moments which have already become history. The people and their neighborhoods are already planning their future.

All of the quotations used in the booklet are actual comments made by residents of the City of Oakland. Their names are all listed in the credits on the closing page. In order to protect their individual privacy and point of view, I have decided not to identify directly the person who

expressed each opinion. Each person's attitudes were expressed to me individually because each wanted the general public to know what s/he had to say, but not necessarily that s/he was the one who said it.

Since it is the people who are central to this booklet, you should know who they are. They are: mechanics, retirees, children, lawyers, janitors, barbers, architects, the unemployed, clergy, veterans, carpenters, clerical workers, hospital workers. More specifically they are: the elderly woman who makes and sells 30,000 dolls per year; the ex-Berkeleyite who couldn't find Oakland the first time he set out to visit it; the self-proclaimed sheriff of East Oakland; the angry ex-offender who is unskilled and unemployed; the great-great grandmother of five generations of Oaklanders; the woman who runs a day care home; the retired mailman who organizes youths around biking; the cafe owner who feeds elderly indigents; the long time socialist crusader; the survivor of Pearl Harbor; the housewife who organizes her neighbors; the minister who sees his role as community organizer; the old timer who calls himself a 'living

legend'; the lifetime residents and the new arrivals; the man who builds windmills in his driveway; the veteran who now fights the war against unemployment at home.

I would like to thank my neighbors, the residents of the seven Community Development Districts — those whom I now know personally, and those whom I didn't meet yet photographed — for your warmth, your sincerity, your information, your time and most of all your willingness to share experiences, memories and honest opinions. This booklet, which I hope shows our city as seen through your eyes is dedicated to all of you who have made the culture of your own city. It attempts to expose your struggles as well as successes, your hardships as well as rewards; the obstacles against which your pride, enthusiasm and anger have risen. I hope also that it inspires you, in a small way, to continue to be confident and determined to keep the power you have fought so hard to obtain.

Fern Tiger



Ethnic dancers



Oakland Symphony Week



On Grand Avenue



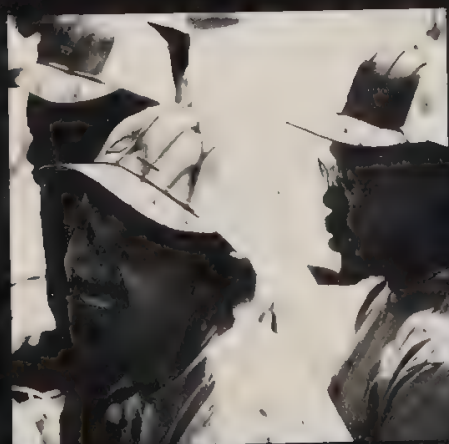
"I'll paint all the houses and make some new ones. I want to stay here in Oakland to live because it's a good place and I'll be a truck driver."

Damanda and Aaron



North Oakland

"We're all pulling together and we feel like we're sittin' on top of the world."





The North Oakland Quilting Bee, quilters and their product, working on the quilt, raffling off the quilt

"I can remember a baseball team, the Oaks, during World War I. . . . They played at San Pablo and 40th Streets, around the Emeryville line."

"Boys skated at Idora Park and they took the girls there."

"I remember when they had the gas lamps, and a man would come around on a bicycle with a little cup, and he'd reach up there and put it out."

"I was born in Oakland. My grandparents came here from Italy. They arrived on the day of the earthquake, and they soon got settled in North Oakland. It was the Little Italy of Oakland at the time."

"The biggest change in North Oakland in 25 years is the fact that I'm living in this house; because this house in this area was restricted when I was a kid and there weren't any Black people, not even any Jews here."

"Oakland, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the best cities there is, cause it's a working city, working class people, along with a certain professional group; professional people up until recently have been very much involved within the same type of community. In other cities and communities, the professionals are completely isolated from working people and there's not that kind of give and take in that kind of struggle. But Oakland is a working city."



"I've done some travelling and Oakland looks really good compared to many other cities especially on the East Coast."

"They were bulldozing across the street to build private apartment units. And I watched them bulldoze trees, and there were these two beautiful, old, tall palm trees and I convinced the developer to keep those trees. I can see them from my window. And everyone who knows calls those two palm trees Lou and Esther after me and my wife. The taller tree is Lou."

"Everywhere I go in the Bay Area, I see my products. I go to the corner and I see a stop light, and I know I built that stop light. So it's good to see that. I'm a ship builder by trade."



North Oakland Baseball Team for Bosn's Locker, North Oakland District Council picnic, District Council meeting

"People are fixing up houses a great deal now. There was a time four years ago when everything was looking pretty grim."

"I'm sure that OCO and CD and other organizations, if given half a chance, will take full credit for the fact that our vacant housing rate has plummeted, and the Oakland housing situation has turned around. True, both of them have been doing their best for years to do something about it. But I think it's happening due to forces totally beyond anybody's control. One of the fallouts of it all is that the low income renters are the guys that are getting the short end of it."

"Local people can keep things in shape."

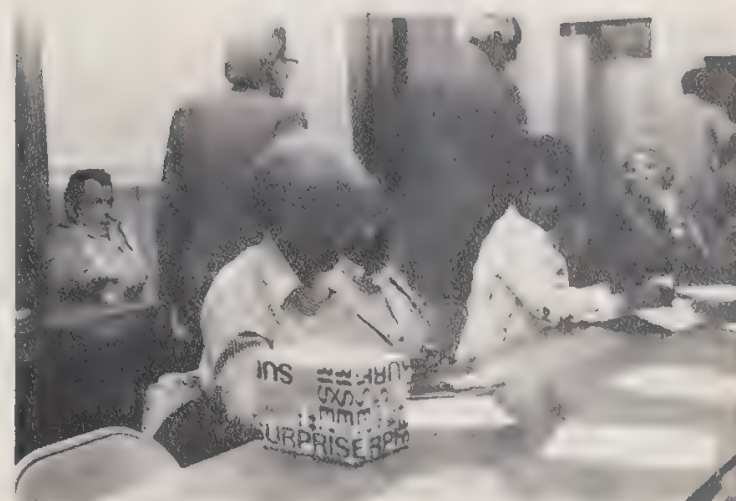
"People get involved in issues they're interested in, that affect them, and I think the last time we had a lot of real serious involvement was when we dealt with re-zoning."

"You gotta believe in your community and you gotta try to build it. And to build unity with other people for a community."

"We've been saved so many times from the outside. . . . It's time to do it from the inside."

"The number one issue in North Oakland and in the rest of the city is the question of unemployment."

"We have things going here in North Oakland . . . slow as it might be."



"Here on Stanford Avenue, getting the median fixed and landscaped . . . it would make other people in the neighborhood take a little more pride. . . . We have a lot of renters in this area and they have special problems that don't seem to get dealt with within any of the neighborhood groups."

"CD has planted trees in our neighborhood. We were worried for a while about the trees, but now they have a new type of tree where the roots grow straight down and they won't knock up the sidewalk. In the past we had this problem where the roots busted up the walks."

"The CD boards are all made up of homeowners and people over 25."



Construction, dedication of Stanford Adeline housing

"You can't divide the people in North Oakland. We are community minded people. We fight for our homes and no one can break that up."

"A lot of energy in this district has been put toward the development of the Grove Street Campus — to make it into a sort of multi-service neighborhood center. Some people think this will be the greatest thing ever for North Oakland. It would provide space for local groups and meetings and sports and other activities. Some other people feel we have been ineffective because we have spent so much time working toward the development of this one project that we haven't really done much else."

"Those neighborhood meetings have got to be one of the most excruciatingly tiresome

things I can think of. I endure them because, like it or not, that's where a lot of the decisions get made."

"The CD Board is just another community group, no more, no less."

"Basically the district board has to deal with how CD money is spent."

"There really isn't anybody on these boards that has any real contact with the interests of renters. It's basically a homeowners family group."

"In North Oakland we have kept the District Council as a working group that deals with the issues that directly affect the North Oakland people, like zoning, traffic, housing, services,

etc. We are a grassroots organization, not a city run department, but we do attend the district board meetings."

"The seven district chairpersons operate independent of their boards. There is a gap there. They should represent the board, not themselves, but they are liking the power they get downtown."

"The average person can't see where this seven district mess is getting us anywhere."

"Too many people are unaware of what is going on and of the decisions that are being made. CD has flyer'd our area when we've asked, but that's a full time job."



61st Street mini park, 59th Street gardeners



“Not enough people know what CD is about . . . you never hear about their programs unless a friend tells you.”

“I heard about the Home Maintenance Improvement Loan by word of mouth. I thought the application was complicated for the average person. At one point, I was working with two or three staff people. I felt like the right hand didn’t know what the left hand was doing.”

“Money is still being used by CD to do plans that were conceived of five and even ten years ago.”

“A lot of times people get involved in their neighborhoods and then they kinda burn out.”

“Mostly groups organized because there was a need. Things weren’t getting done . . . garbage pick-up, dogs, vacant houses . . .”

“I can remember how we began to organize into small neighborhood groups in order to get better services. Like there was a time when people kept dumping trash in vacant lots in our neighborhoods . . . and we began to think that maybe the people dumping the trash weren’t even living here . . . so we started a campaign to ask these people in their cars for directions to a close-by street and then they could never tell us and they’d say . . . ‘Oh, I don’t live here, I live in the hills,’ or whatever . . . and then we got real mad.”

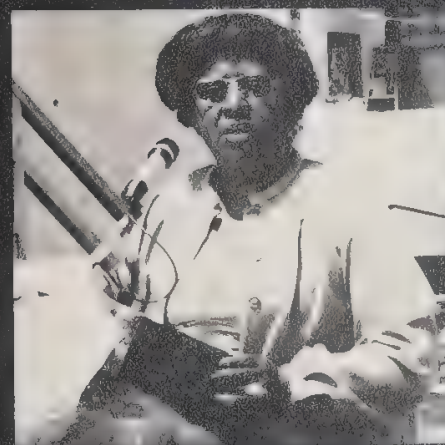
“We’re doing things for ourselves instead of looking for handouts and so far as possible, this is what we should do.”

“Here in Oakland, we have one of the most genuine representative citizen participation organizations that I’ve ever heard of. Every city by law has one now, but I haven’t heard of one of them that begins to approach Oakland’s in its genuine representational nature. Oakland has a structure that’s been set up and has had a real voice.”

“I like living in Oakland very much. I used to live in Berkeley. Oakland is a real community, opposed to Berkeley which is not really a community but a clique. You feel like an outsider when you come in there.”



“When I grow up I’m gonna clean up all of Oakland and see that it stays clean . . . and we’ll help.” *Tyrone and friends*



West Oakland

"West Oakland was a way of being, not just a place to live. I wouldn't live nowhere but West Oakland."





Victorian houses in Oak Center, details, small business

"I've been in this neighborhood since the fifth grade. I'm retired now, so that's a lot of years. West Oakland was a tight neighborhood, well lived. There were diverse ethnic groups: Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Blacks . . . complete in itself, very stable. Then people had to move because of the federal programs. They were coming back visiting every day. The older ones never did get adjusted. There were several West Oakland reunions after that."

"7th Street was a bustling area. It was alive with businesses and shops and after hours gambling places and houses of prostitution and drug stores and night clubs, really alive with action all the time. It was quite an area. It was maybe



not a baby Harlem, but if one existed, it probably was. That's where everything happened. . . . Everything was down there on 7th Street between Market and Pine . . . everything."

"I'm trying not to just reflect on the negative things of the past because a lot of times the people who reflect on the negatives, they're trying to more than justify the positives that they have in their lives currently, and it makes the positives look so much larger than they really are. I try not to reflect on them, but occasionally I take a nostalgic look at them."

"Then the war started, and that's when the big migration of people coming in, and this is when



West Oakland began to overflow because there were too many people. I can remember we'd go down to the 16th Street station after school to watch the people get off the trains, and it was like a parade. You just couldn't believe that that many people would come in, and some didn't even have any luggage; they would come with boxes, with 3 or 4 children with no place to stay, and then there would be people there, and they'd ask everyone if they had any place to stay or could they make some space into rooms."

"There was racism when we came. . . . In the South I knew where I stood; out here it was all hidden. Discrimination, flat, pure, hard . . . it was worse than it was in the South, but only dressed up. It was invisible slavery."



House moving, renovation

“I was on BART recently (I never take BART because of who it was really built to serve — it wasn’t built to serve the inner city; it was designed to whisk people right through the urban areas and get them back to suburbia in a hurry), and I was thinking about the buildings that BART and the Post Office replaced.”

“The major issue is to upgrade all of the communities, and when I say all of them, I even mean the hills. There’s a kinda flip-flop goin’ on now: the Blacks are goin’ to the hills and the hills is comin’ back here where they first was.”

“Recently a young girl called me asking if West Oakland was a good place to live. She wanted to

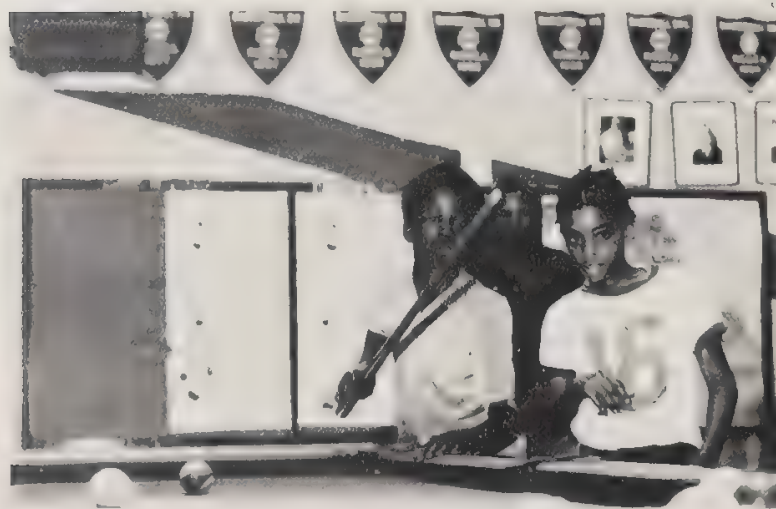
live there . . . and I told her: ‘that’s the only place to live’. I still have it in my heart and my mind to build West Oakland.”

“Everything I do, the way that I function, is I’m a West Oaklander, because of the things that I’ve learned. Many famous athletes, people who’ve made it in other walks of life, remain West Oaklanders because there was something that we got out of it, and out of the conditions that existed; something we made positive that we turned around and people were able to excel, not because of, but in spite of some of those things. Wherever you move, you take some of West Oakland with you. . . . That is what is in the hearts and aspirations of the people.”

“The old Redevelopment Agency tore half of West Oakland down, so they just had all these empty lots and all these people were gone; that busted up most of a solid community.”

“The houses were mainly Victorian. Following the first urban renewal project; that was the first destruction of the area, done by the federal government. Then the people pulled together and there were court suits. Oakland wasn’t the only city. It was happening all over.”

“When you get involved you be arguin’ with your people and you arguin’ with the peoples downtown and both sides are always tellin’ you, you don’t know what you’re talking about.”



YMCA Day Care Center, West Oakland Boys Club activities (recipients of Public Facilities Grants)

"I would hate to be unemployed; you see all those people driving by your place with a job and you think: 'I could do that job if given the opportunity, and I could even walk to that job . . .' and all these people are just taking the money right out there to their little boxes on the side of the hill."

"When I joined the board, they were all saying: 'We want curbs and gutters'. And it was taking forever to put the curbs in, plus all the contracts were going out of town, so community funds that come into Oakland don't benefit the people of Oakland as much as they could, because you could be hiring Oakland based contractors to do that work. We had projects backed up from the first year and it was already the third year."

"You really gotta go to those meetings, follow the budget. Most of these people, they don't do that. If they participate at all they'll come to those meetings so they only know what is going on in their neighborhoods; they never get the broader picture."

"We had enough fight, common sense, professionalism, business, to figure out what we wanted. The main change that we were very proud of was the right to remain and rehabilitate in Oak Center if we so desired."

"We kept hearing that you can't fight City Hall. A lot of people took that as a basic truth. Actually it was a propaganda to keep you excited and feeling you could not succeed."

"I got the free paint and I painted my house myself, and now whenever I turn the corner to 14th Street, where my house is, my heart flutters when I see my beautiful house."

"When people get a good position they drop West Oakland. Some of them still advocate good programs for West Oakland, but they're not residents any more. Once you get a job it kinda removes you. And when a lot of people get jobs they leave . . . mostly the young people. So it draws off the leadership. So when we start talking about organization, the people who start to organize and get into other things, then they leave, and the community is right back where it was before with nobody really there who knows how to organize and get things done."



New curbs and gutters west of Cypress Street



“West Oakland can be revitalized without speculators but it depends on how the district pushes the city to implement the programs. You see, what you gotta do is give people housing they can afford. So that means you’re going to have to sell a house low enough for people to buy. Once they buy them that’s it. They take care of it. You gotta make it available. The district board’s got to force the city to follow it all the way through. We need strong organizations.”

“There was some critical and crucial times. Especially in the ‘60’s. With all of the faults that was made at the hands of the Black Panthers, they did some good. There’s so much good in the worst of us; so much bad in the good of us.”

“There is a moving desire to live in Oakland, and part of that is a result of what’s happening in Community Development.”

“We don’t need \$75,000.00 housing; we can’t afford that, so unless you can come up with a program that’s in our price range, then CD’s not doing the job. They should take the loss, that’s what the money is for—to develop the community. No need to develop if the people who live there now are gonna have to go somewhere else. . . . That’s what’s happening. A lot of these programs are forcing us out of our neighborhoods; they should devise programs so that low-income people can afford to own homes. They shouldn’t just fix

up some landlord’s house so that he can charge you a lot of rent and make a lot of money. We’d like to own the houses in our neighborhood.”

“What’s important to note about West Oakland are those housing programs that CD was not operating here. We have some special housing problems that we need addressed and we think they they should provide low-income housing that can fit our low-income needs. We need the city to say ‘We’re going to fix it up right here’ and then watch and make sure they do it . . . like they did in Oak Center.”

“CD sends you so much stuff in the mail that you have to read, it’s like going to school.”



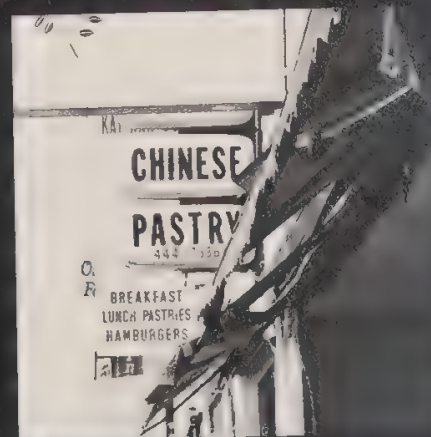
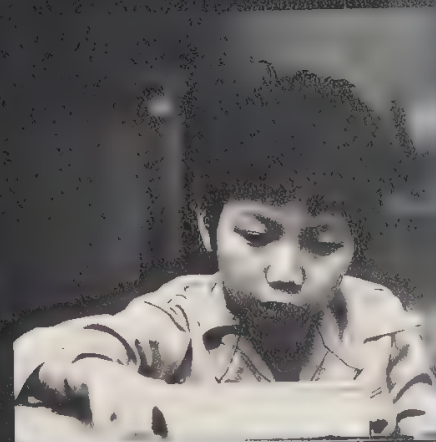
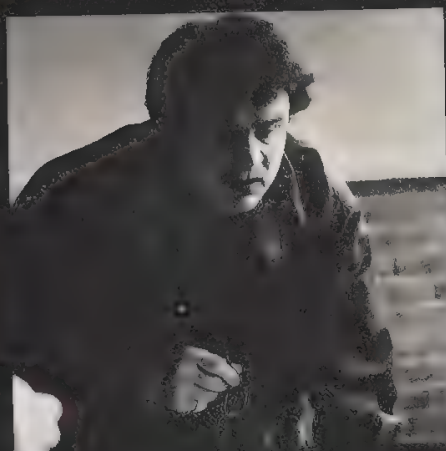
"I want to live in Oakland and be a doctor. I think that there should be more ping pong and pin ball machines in the recreation centers."

Gerrick



Chinatown/Central

"Many of us active in this district no longer live here, but our roots are here; we spend a lot of time here."





Lincoln Center Snail Race, Mrs. Gee in her garden, Oak Park Neighbors meeting

"I lived next door when I was born. I was actually born on Jackson Street in San Francisco, and I came to live on Jackson Street in Oakland a few days later. I have always lived in Chinatown."

"My family moved here to Oak Park because it was centrally located. When my family came to Oakland, they moved to this very house. It was built in 1925 and that's when we moved in. It's all South American paneling. It's extremely well-built. This was the equivalent of living in the hills in those days. It was a beautiful tree lined area. They had a carriage entrance here with servants' quarters and all that."

"I think the main difference between my

children growing up here in Chinatown and my growing up here was that there were so many children to play with, because there were so many homes here. Now there are just a few homes and therefore only a few families and few children. When BART came, the houses went and there went the families."

"I remember as a child running down to the corner on San Pablo to get a candybar and then all of a sudden it seems that at some time, it seemed wrong to do it . . . you couldn't really just run down the street."

"It's the charm of old Oakland that we want to bring out again."

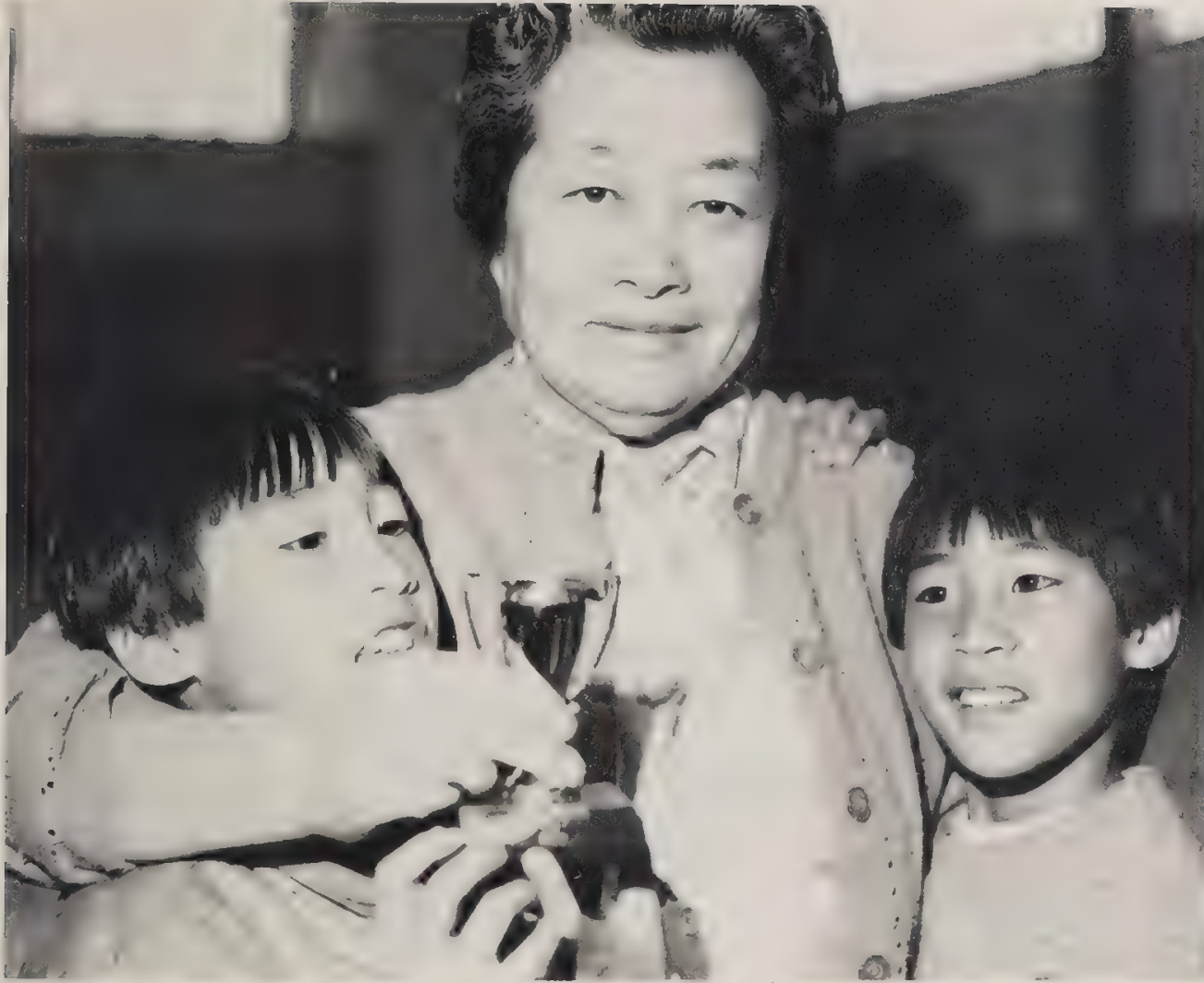
"The Chinatown Central District is not like

the other districts because the small neighborhoods are not contiguous and the downtown business area is in the middle."

"You've got mini-communities within the larger community and also in terms of participation; you've got the business community, the social service community, the resident community."

"People form into different organizations around specific concerns that they have in their neighborhood or in their line of activity."

"I don't think that our board sees itself as wanting to become the government of the district. What we try to do is encourage and give support to those other organizations that arise



Rusty, Ronnie Young with Cecilia Ho at Lincoln Neighborhood Center, the Snail Race



and decide that they have a cause and want to do something about it in the the district and give them our encouragement and support. But we don't try to make them feel they have to have our total endorsement or approval in everything, because I don't think that would work."

"There are hardly any more residences in Chinatown. We've been kicked out by the Freeway, Laney College, BART, Hong Kong U.S.A., etc."

"Redevelopment has meant tearing down a lot of things."

"Chinese people were not aware they could fight for their rights; they didn't know how; I

think we sold out to all this development."

"Most of us in the Chinatown neighborhood don't go out and really fight for things. We just live here; we're content with what we've got and we don't demand a lot of change. I think these demands come from outside our community."

"We got all these bilingual street signs, but I don't even know if anyone notices them."

"A lot of people in the Bay Area don't know our Chinatown exists. They all know about San Francisco's Chinatown . . . but we have 3 fortune cookie factories, 14 restaurants, a lot of sewing factories, grocery stores and bakeries. We are not a tourist center and that's good, because our shops serve our community."

"Oakland has a lot of things going for it — climate for one, available space, and the economics of the area. It is a central place for commerce."

"Something neat is happening here on San Pablo and in this old downtown area. People say, 'Oh San Pablo will never change.' We're fighting this negativism . . . because we know it can change."

"I think there have been vigorous changes here in the district and that it is the strongest community in the city. This is evidenced by growth on all levels . . . and the fact that the people are willing to spend money to upgrade the area."



Children's Chinese New Year Parade: Year of the Ram



"We're working on an overall design for San Pablo Avenue. And an identity for it — the San Pablo Gateway — gateway to the City Center — gateway of the old to the new. That's Oakland — it's variety, it's distinct, it's old and it's new. We're concentrating on small business with the personal touch. We want to keep a human scale. And we hope to make it available to foot traffic."

"I went to the first neighborhood meeting with a negative attitude expecting the worst, not expecting cooperation. Then after months of meetings I said . . . 'You know something is going to happen and we're going to make it happen!' I don't know how long it will take, but I know it will happen. We're not really fighting

anyone. No one's saying no, so it's just a matter of when, it's not a matter of if."

"Community Development has tried to take the citizen participation process seriously and has really made an effort to inform and involve the community."

"Community Development is excellent in terms of its high regard for citizen input."

"Our council was an outgrowth of a process that began with people in the community saying that we felt it was very important that the city, for purposes of citizen participation, not just form a commission, but that there be actual citizen participation across the city."

"The District Council is somewhat limited. Mainly its function is to see that the Chinatown Central District gets its share of the CD funds and make plans to implement projects."

"We had a rather rapid falling out of participation once it became clear that what we were focusing on was bricks and mortar type projects by and large, although there's continued to be a fair amount of sentiment on our council and on our board to address social service needs as we can and that's been illustrated mainly through grants recently funding YMCA to expand child care facilities . . . and the Lincoln Neighborhood Center was another quasi-social service program. Again it



Chinatown

was coming at it from the bricks and mortar angle, and the other big interest that has kept attention and we've been involved in over the years is the downtown multi-purpose senior center."

"Planning for a neighborhood center is a very slow, cumbersome process until it finally emerges and there's something tangible there to relate to. People get put off and discouraged, particularly if they haven't had a lot of exposure in the past to community type meetings."

"It is a frustrating process for the community because we as people tend to think of problems in a more wholistic way. If you've got a child

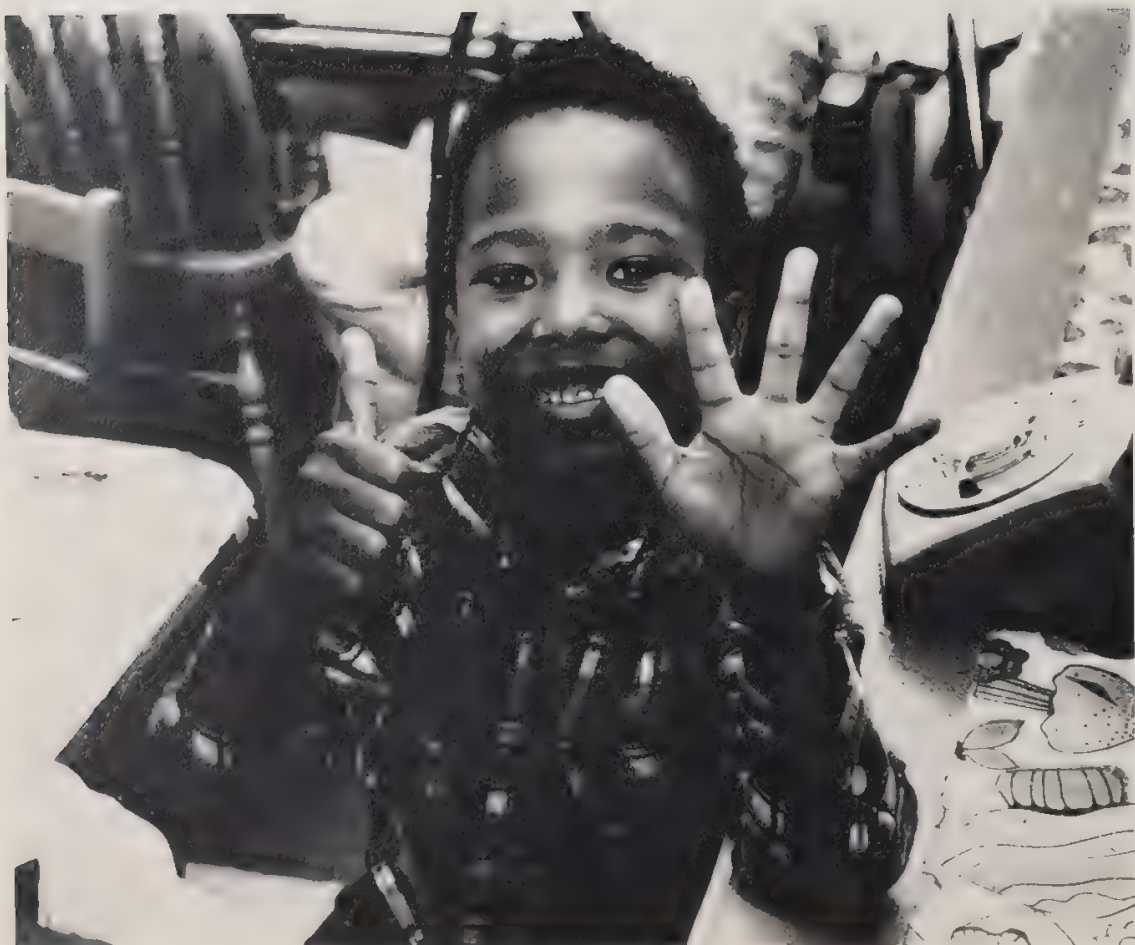
care program, for example, or a senior citizen program, you think of it not as just the building, but also of what goes on in the building. But of course Community Development is pretty much limited to dealing with some physical aspect of it rather than the human aspect of it and so community groups or individuals who come to participate tend to get frustrated by the limitations that they find are imposed on what Community Development can and can't do."

"The feds carve us up into all these little boxes and you've got to find ways of making their boxes fit together. The community person feels a need and if there are funds there, their sense is that it would just make sense to make those funds fit the need,

rather than the need to fit the funds, so they get put off."

"One thing that is important to note about the Chinatown Central District is that it is predominantly commercial."

"I think the Chinatown area has been productive. We are well aware of our proximity to downtown Oakland and we are excited about all the redevelopment. We are enthusiastic about the new shopping center, Hong Kong USA, the convention center, the hotel, etc. All these projects should bring jobs to Oaklanders. And we know that the strength of any city rests on the support of strong neighborhoods."



"I'm 6 years old now but I'm gonna be a policeman. I'll make Oakland better because I'll take care of things."

John



San Antonio

"People have banded together to fight for things they need."





Totsville Day Care Center (recipient of Public Facilities Grant)

"I can remember the earthquake; there was black smoke over in San Francisco and I can remember all the people that came over to live in tents. There was a fire in my father's business in San Francisco and he helped to rebuild San Francisco . . . and he never did go back into his own business; he just worked for other people."

"I remember the Armistice after World War I and there was a big parade down Broadway."

"East 14th Street was the main commercial street. It was just a gravel street with two tracks, for the trolley and they went all the way out to Hayward."

"You used to be able to shoot ducks down by the lake . . . and there were three boat houses."

"We used to go up and hike in the hills and when you got there — there was no freeway there — MacArthur Boulevard was called Hopkins Street and once you got beyond that, you were in the country . . . and there were a couple of hills; we'd climb over and we'd go through 'Devil's Slide', and we could hike up there several times during the summer. It was a major field trip for us to go hiking up there."

"Oakland was a fairly mild city, dull by comparison to San Francisco. That's when everyone referred to San Francisco as 'the City'. Boy have things changed. Oakland is 'the City,' to me."

"I'm 72 years old and my children, grand

children, great-grand children and great-great-grandchildren all live in Oakland. That's five generations."

"I had never been to Oakland before; I had no knowledge of the area; in fact, I got lost coming here the first time, from Berkeley."

"The first year I lived here, it was like being in Siberia . . . everyone I knew was in Berkeley and no one from there visited me . . . they all thought Oakland was so far away."

"I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. When I came to the West Coast and found this neighborhood I felt like I was home. They even call it the Brooklyn Neighborhood. This is my home now and I just might live out my life here."



Children in San Antonio, small business



Oakland is to San Francisco what Brooklyn is to Manhattan. Manhattan would die without the workers of Brooklyn and San Francisco could wash out to sea but Oakland would survive, 'cause this is not a tinsel town — this is where real working people live."

"The city shouldn't ignore us. We're not second cousins to the hills."

"Individuals from different backgrounds have come together and they are trying to live together."

"Yes, I'm White and the neighborhood is largely Black, but the issue isn't what you do to stop gentrification . . . now that I'm here, what do I do . . . what can I do for the neighborhood and

what can the neighborhood do for me."

"A sense of pride has been developed through Community Development."

"If you dedicate yourself to neighborhood representation, you don't know where you'll be in ten years, because you're at the mercy of other people."

"I am concerned about making the neighborhood as a whole work together. I moved into a neighborhood, and I believe that my concerns are the same as everyone else's."

"We formed an organization because we were all fixing up old houses. . . . It was like a support group, but now the issues are larger. What will

the neighborhood be like in the next twenty years?"

"We moved to Oakland because we wanted to buy a house, and there was affordable housing here."

"We read about the Marks Foran Loan in the newspaper, but there was too much red tape involved in applying."

"I used the self help paint plan. I didn't know if it was real. So they sent this letter and told what I'd have to do . . . three classes to learn about painting. I chose the colors myself . . . white with blue trim — same as it was before — only fresh lookin'."



Community Development's Home Maintenance Improvement Loan Program, self help home repair

"The CD Board is a voice that gets listened to."

"I think that this city falls under too much pressure from developers."

"The City of Oakland is run by business. I am really concerned about the proposed Economic Development Corporation, because multinational corporations have too much power. Multinationals get concessions. . . . They have already made an impact and their power must be kept in check."

"The Community Development Board can affect neighborhoods and can influence the City Council. It can deal with streets, public works, traffic patterns. I believe that the City doesn't

really want the district boards, but they need us. . . . They have to have us . . . according to government regulations. Nobody in bureaucracy wants another bureaucracy."

"I feel something's wrong in this district. I can't figure it out. We've got a lot of great people — old timers and newcomers. But nothing seems to happen. We have got to begin to stir things up ourselves, because whoever is supposed to be getting things moving, just isn't doing it."

"If the money from HUD should dry up, the immediate effects would be minimal on a physical or economic level. However, there would be initial frustration at the community level because the community

would be ripped off from its input. The Community Development Block Grant Program is a safety valve. . . . It keeps people happy and gives some money to the communities. If you cut off that channel, the frustration of being voiceless could result in urban violence."

"In reality a lot can be done in the districts if there's a committed staff member. You need to have pull within the CD office to get things done."

"There are problems in finding out about CD's programs. It's a shoddy process and there are so many hassles."

"I began to attend meetings and soon I was



Self helpers in the area, participants at the 1st asbestos siding removal bee



attending more meetings than the elected Board members."

"There doesn't seem to be an organized effort to get our CD Board visible to the whole district. Too many people just don't know about it."

"I am trying to restore this old Victorian house. I couldn't get financing from banks . . . but I moved in, as is, and cleaned up one room at a time."

"When people come here, I can show them Oakland now, in preference to San Francisco."

"I came here 40 years ago. I was driving around and Lake Merritt caught my eye. I feel like it's the greatest city in the whole world."

"Nobody from Oakland, when we travelled outside the area, would say we were from Oakland. We'd just say we were from San Francisco, just for identification. Sometimes we'd even say we were from Berkeley, because everyone knew the university. Now of course, Oakland has its own identity. As the intricate working parts of a city it far outdistances San Francisco. I saw so many things happening and changes, 'til I'm kinda pleased with the city now and I always say I'm from Oakland."

"CD has some good projects, but if you go back and look at where most of the money's gone . . . it's gone to the business community. The biggest things we're complaining about is that

the money contracted to do those projects should go to Oakland companies."

"Getting things done is a long and cumbersome process and you've got to follow it every step of the way, not only that, you've got to watch dog it every step of the way so they don't change it on you, or that it doesn't get lost."

"I wish that we could get a lot of our retired people who have the expertise and let them do some kind of contracting, real labor people. A lot of these young people that walk the streets without jobs could learn from that, and the retired people could be overseers of jobs which means the big bulk of repair costs wouldn't just be on a big contract basis and then it would keep the retired people active."



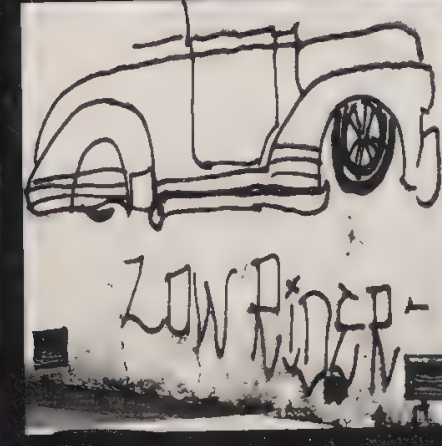
“I will plant lots of trees and ban the cars from the streets because I don’t think Oakland should be polluted.”

Luke



Fruitvale

"I raised all my children here, I married here, my children married here, my wife died here. . . . My roots are here in Oakland. . . . My real roots are here, much as I was born in Mexico."





Farming at the 39th Avenue Community Garden

“We consider ourselves Oaklanders because our hearts are in Oakland.”

“I grew up here in Fruitvale and I raised our seven children here.”

“I was born in Jingtletown, which is the 23rd Avenue District. The way Jingtletown’s name came about, it seems like many years ago when immigrants were coming to this country from Portugal, they came on a boat; the boat got lost in the fog, came up the Estuary, run aground; they got off in that district, and the young men got jobs working in the cotton mills. On payday, they’d get their money in change; in those days in gold and silver. They’d put all this silver in their pockets, and on Saturday nights they’d walk down the street jingling the money.”



“I came to Oakland on July 5, 1905. . . . I was 10 years old. I remember the earthquake. I thought the end of the world’s coming. Smoke was rising high in San Francisco. Lots of people came over and lived in tents right here in Fruitvale.”

“In those days we had a goat and we lived right down here on 36th Avenue.”

“If you wanted a garbage man you paid him 25¢ a month. It was all private . . . and they picked it up with horse and wagon. For mail we went down to the Fruitvale Post Office and you’d pay a fellow 25¢ and he’d deliver your mail. There used to be beautiful trees along Fruitvale Avenue, and there was a creek and it was boarded up; so it was more like a street made out of wood.”



“I can remember the little ranch here in Fruitvale and the ostrich farm that was on High Street. . . . There was a creamery on East 14th Street and we’d skate up there with a bucket and get it filled with milk and skate back.”

“Oakland was like a suburban city because many people were commuting from here. The ferry left on schedule, every 20 minutes, except when it got foggy; it would just stand still and blow the horn.”

“I remember coming to the Bay Area; we were coming for the golden dreams . . . the real land of milk and honey. . . . It was an all American city. We were a second wave of immigrants. My brothers were all excited because they saw this sign that said ‘All-American City’.”



Neighborhood protest against proposed disco! Tree planting at Senior Center



Mural artist

"Basically the way I see it, the district board has to deal with how CD money is spent. There are members of our Fruitvale Board that see the problem with a broader base. There are areas in Fruitvale that are not organized and it's true that they need help . . . so whether it's the district board or whether it's someone from the Oakland Community Organizations, the important thing is that we continue to build strong neighborhood groups."

"It must be the people in the district who have control over where that money is going and if we concentrate on making sure there are strong neighborhood groups then we never need fear that someone else is ripping off the money. We can decide among ourselves where the

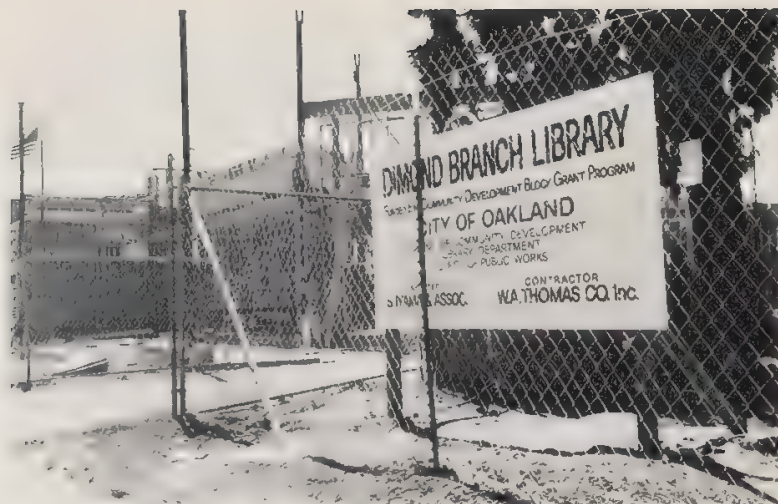
priorities should be and we don't fight among ourselves over it."

"CD has helped to break down the feelings of suspicion and fear. Today you see more optimism and it is founded on the CD system. And on the impact the boards have had on their own areas."

"Successes, the success story got around in the neighborhood groups, so you gradually saw that more and more people were asking for assistance in organizing around issues and the thing just mushroomed very, very quickly. Within a few years the Oakland Community Organizations had lots of smaller groups pulled together. We began to realize that one thing that we all talked about was housing. Within a few

years the Oakland Community Organizations had lots of smaller groups pulled together. There were too many boarded up houses, and we realized that if all the groups pulled together instead of each neighborhood fighting about 1 or 2 vacant houses . . . if we pooled our resources and did research, we could have clout. We turned things around. We did something about it and now it's just history."

"We've got all these accomplishments because we've learned to organize in our own neighborhoods, to pull together our resources and work with each other and it's also more fun than working alone and it makes more sense."



Construction of Dimond Branch Library

"I think Oakland's success is due to the remarkable leadership that has come from the community's active residents."

"The neighborhoods are working. . . . Look at the gardens and it's a small example as to how it all works."

"You remodel one house, you fix up the outside . . . and the next door neighbor paints the outside of his house. . . . That's the way it works."

"I began to see changes . . . people who were once complacent; they used to let change envelop them. Now they sense power and feel they have the right to change and effect things. They know they can make things happen. We have gone beyond small issues."



"The Fruitvale Theater was a classic example of a corporate slumlord. Well we got a victory there and now the residents and the merchants feel better. We've always got to be watching our neighborhoods. We have to keep track of the realtors because they are the most horrendous lobby in the state. If there is any one experience in life that taught me about community and how it can work, the Fruitvale Theater issue was it."

"The way I feel is that downtown development is going to take place, but in the past it's taken place to the exclusion of the neighborhoods. It's always been 'no' to the neighborhoods because downtown had to come first. And now we are saying it



doesn't have to be that way. Don't exclude the neighborhoods. Sure we want a nice downtown, we're proud of all of Oakland, but the city shouldn't put all of its eggs into one basket and forget that there are neighborhoods and shops out there where the people are."

"The future goals should be to build a strong economic base in the districts. . . . Downtown development is great, but it won't work without local development and local support. There must be strong local economic development or else everyone will be frustrated."

"Economic Development is trying to use the district boards as their legitimation, but they don't really pay any attention to us."



Easter Sunday dedication and activity at Foothill Meadows Park



"I think our voice is even more important as viewed by people outside of Oakland. People in Washington know that we've got a bunch of people out here that don't necessarily follow the dictates of the city government and that there are some independent thinkers here in Oakland."

"CD brought more people into the process, and we've worked hard to keep them coming in."

"The best by-product of CD is the good working relationships that evolve. In the long run, that's what it's about, but I don't think the city staff realizes that. I don't think CD gets anywhere near the 'thank you's' and credit it deserves. It is doing lots of behind the scenes things and rarely is recognized.

Smaller groups and individuals take credit, but I guess that's o.k., too, just so long as things get done."

"People who have needs and some hope ... they're the ones that come to the meetings. Those without any hope don't bother."

"Sometimes you have to fight City Hall, but usually you should try to work with it, not be confrontive, not alienate; rather develop good working relationships."

"CD has done but one thing that I know of and that was the Dimond Library."

"I believe that OCO acts as a catalyst and CD acts as a facilitator, at least here in Fruitvale. And I don't care who gets credit for the

successes here. We all want what's best for Fruitvale. But I think that CD is working because OCO exists and OCO can exist because CD's dollars are there to handle implementation."

"I think the city staff person, the coordinator should live in the district. That way they'd understand it more, it'd be their community that they'd be working for; it'd be more than a job."

"CD has had only one coordinator that was Latino, and the Latino community resents that."

"How well the elected chairperson works with the city staff is critical. ... It shouldn't be that way, but it is."



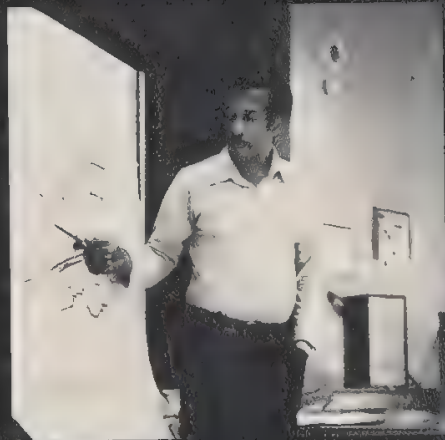
"I'll become a doctor and help all the people in Oakland be healthy and stay healthy."

Melva



Central East Oakland

"CD isn't doing it . . . the neighborhood people are."





Home renovation, self help, Black Vets clean up and board up of vacant housing, home repair



“I came in 1943; in the back of my mind, at that time, I thought California offered a better opportunity for my children. I lived in East Oakland ever since I was here. It still feels like a small town.”

“They used to call this area Melrose and it had hardly any houses.”

“After you passed 23rd Avenue, there wasn’t too much to see except horses and some cows and truck gardens and some nurseries. In fact you were just about out of town.”

“The street cars that ran down East 14th Street were drawn by horses.”

“The area was sparsely built; we called it the country.”

“They used to call this the bedroom community, here.”

“Years ago, it was like a little garden paradise out here. East 14th Street was a beautiful shopping area.”

“The church is the only thing in the Black community of any magnitude that the Blacks operate exclusively.”

“What other outlet, besides the church, do we have where a fellow could work in a ditch all week long in overalls and old shoes and on a Sunday morning he could put on his clean shirt and shiny shoes and sit and cross his legs because he’s an officer, a deacon in the church . . . or that woman can be the president of a

church mission department . . . or that maid who has been scrubbing floors can be a teacher in the Sunday School. It’s the only place that they could go to get some kind of recognition.”

“Some of the other districts have 20 years of experience on us. they were all involved in Model Cities programs and other stuff in the 60’s. So we’re just learning some of the ropes that they already know.”

“The same racism that I saw when I came here after World War II is still here . . . but it has a little more sugar coating on it.”

“People stimulate other people; you get involved; people inspire people and you become effective. The CD Board should be that



Don Leslie, windmill builder



effective organization here in Central East Oakland."

"I have hope, or I wouldn't be out here working with the people. I have high hopes, and hopes that I see the number one thing get done — keeping Oakland's dollars in Oakland."

"... houses, this is the thing that makes a city: houses, where people live and the houses can say something about the people in them."

"When things get done, Community Development is responsible, but the community leaders always have to stay on top of it."

"We are Urban Homesteaders and we learned how to do our own repairs. We never had a house before. ... Our counsellor called to see how we were getting along. He'd drop over to see how we were doing."

"I don't even know parts of Oakland anymore. Some parts look really beautiful. But I don't think that the changes here in Central East Oakland are as drastic as they are in other parts of the city."

"One person alone had no voice or anything, so what do you do? You get a group of people and make demands, and you become people power, and it has had a great effect."

"I would be more active if we could get our area together. We've never had real organization of

small neighborhood block groups ... like they have in some of the other districts."

"The district boards hasn't really gotten to the grass roots person."

"In most of these programs, the minorities take advantage of more than the Whites, simply because of finances; so a lot of the Whites feel that it's for Blacks and minorities and welfare people, so they don't even want to be associated with it. But basically the problems are all the same when you're on fixed incomes."

"East 14th Street is unique; it's a neighborhood commercial area, in the old fashioned sense of small, locally owned shops. I think it could be restored to its original purpose."



Mrs. Mouton in remodeled kitchen, HMIP recipient, The Swards: urban homesteaders

"The district boards should be expanded and the districts should be educated as to the necessity of knowing what's going on."

"I started to go to the district board meetings because I wanted to know what was happening."

"I was really surprised about how many people didn't know about the paint and weatherization program. Some knew about the paint, but they didn't know about the free weatherization and so forth. People just aren't aware. It seems to me that if they were truly interested in spending the money where it should go and in seeing that these houses were habitable, they would get all that information out."

"There are a lot of programs available that I didn't know about until I got on the board, got involved and started reading up on it all."

"I read about the Urban Homestead program in the newspaper. . . . We finally waited a year and then we heard we had won. . . . I have a family of 8. I fell in love with the kitchen and the bathroom. The contractor wanted to close off the fireplace, but I set my foot down. I feel like I perked up the rest of the neighborhood. This house got fixed up and it gave the whole neighborhood a shot in the arm."

"We have to find a way to minimize all the red tape."

"I'm an Urban Homesteader and I found out about the program from a friend. When they told me I had got chosen for this house, I came out to see it, and I'd forgot because I'd looked at so many houses. Then when I saw which one I had picked, my heart got let down because it looked so awful . . . all boarded up, and terrible. It was a disaster. The windows were broken; the door was kicked in; the inside was all broken up . . . but now it's all fixed up, I've got central heat, new windows, a new bath and kitchen, and I think it's just beautiful. I'd never have a house . . . that's what I always thought. Now this house is all mine. The living room is empty; we never use that room."



Maxwell Park



"I didn't use the free paint program, because I didn't want to go through all that hassle and rigamarole and paper work and this and that. But then again, I could afford to get it done. Some people can't and then they don't have a choice."

"The city agencies are looking at places that are already totally deteriorated, further out; that's what is getting most attention. That kind of deterioration hasn't really happened in this area yet. But they're not using preventive tactics. It's like going to the dentist after your mouth has rotted out."

"I felt like the district board was just like a suggestion committee. We'd come up with these grand ideas, but they didn't have the

money. I guess knowing how to put the pressure on . . . it makes a difference."

"We have some structures here, not monumental ones and perhaps that's good. What's most important is the foundation that has been built in terms of recognition between community and city government."

"Regardless of how the money was actually spent, it did give people a sense of importance, and many recommendations were carried out."

"We suggested lots of things in the early years, but they always said there would be a maintenance problem when the five years was up and funding would end."

"I think that other districts have more live wires that's pluggin' and pushin' their areas and you're gonna see more changes there."

"Sometimes I get the feeling that people are given money, knowing that the project is going to fail, so they can go back and say 'we tried it and it didn't work your way, and, therefore, you have to do it our way.' I have no proof of any of this but I think money is funneled into some things that they know are going to fail."

"I just can't see or feel the impact that CD has made. It just isn't visible here in Central East. I've worked with the program, I've experienced it, I know there is improvement, but we can't see any results."



“I’m going to build . . . make more buildings, pretty houses and fix the streets. Maybe I’ll be a disco star.”

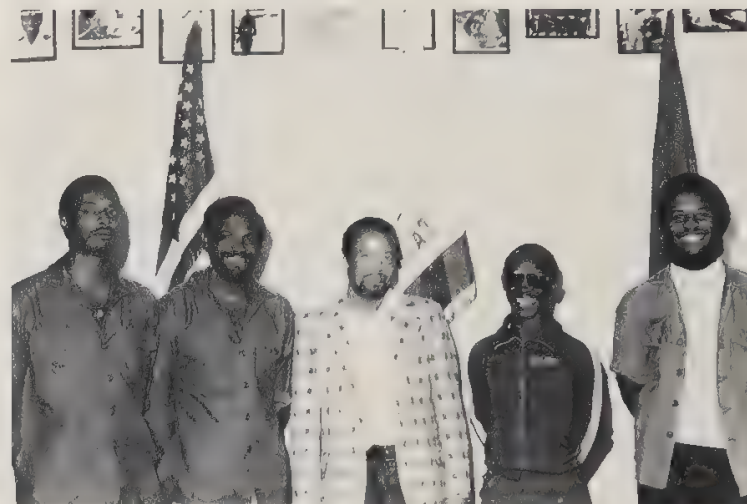
Damien



Elmhurst

"Some people think there isn't a piece of ground in the world as important as Elmhurst and I agree."





Woodland Highlands Community Gardeners, Elmhurst resident, tree planting by ONTOP at 81st Avenue

Staff: Bikes Unlimited, Black Veterans Association, Elmhurst District Board meeting

“Out here was farm area. They had milk cows right behind us and there were rows of hot houses and they raised flowers, roses and then businesses came in and during World War II they started tearing down and building homes and all the daffodils went.”

“You’d see women out in the old metal tubs washing and scrubbing, and then when they ran electricity through after the Depression, we began to have it installed in our home, and we undid the gas lights.”

“I was born here; this particular lot, my maternal grandparents bought in 1900. They built a little before the earthquake and the fire in San Francisco. When they bought here the streets had names like Elmhurst and

Pittsburgh, not letters like now. We were one of the very few Black families out in East Oakland then.”

“I hope the racism that I felt as a young woman has ended. I remember applying for a job and going with a friend of mine who was White. I was more qualified than she was and we applied for the same job. After my interview, I left my gloves on the desk purposely, and when I went back to get them, my application was in the waste basket. I was offered a job as a matron instead of as a clerical worker. My friend got the job but she didn’t last long because she wasn’t qualified.”

“You know when you’re little you don’t pay as much attention to your heritage as you should,

but I know my grandfather didn’t like belittling himself, so he learned his own profession, barbering, and he instilled in us to go to school and to learn a profession, but he also taught us not to be ashamed to do domestic work to help yourself along. During the Depression, my grandfather became a porter and he loved to travel and to cook.”

“I moved here in 1954, 25 years ago. I thought Elmhurst was the most beautiful, serene community I’d ever seen before; beautiful homes, lawns, people, not over crowded, good business strip—enough of a variety to service the community; you could possibly find anything you really wanted on East 14th Street.”



The 'bikers' at Bikes Unlimited

"It goes without saying that Elmhurst's the greatest place there is."

"I started one of the first neighborhood organizations in East Oakland. We were having some problems with people speeding on 84th Avenue and we finally got sick of it. We decided that we were going to have police out there to stop the speeding, so we organized an improvement club and we had everybody keep a pad and pencil right there at their front door; and when anybody came by speeding, we'd take down their number and then we'd call the police . . . so many people, so many cars, so many license numbers and the police took care of that, and then we took care of other neighborhood issues."



"A lot of people in the community now have become sophisticated in this method. They know who in the power structure to see and know which way to approach which in itself is a tremendous thing because that way you get people interested in the government as well as the community. So I think that in itself is a big reward for the people."

"As one individual, when they come down to speak to a politician, one individual is nowhere. But if you have an organization together where you can say, let's discuss this thing, let's see what we can do . . . the Mayor's not going to come out to my house just to talk to me, but if you have your organization, then you're going to have him come to see you. Being organized

you got power."

"We have less rundown houses but we still have a long way to go."

"I think the guys in the trenches need more recognition, like when they built the East Oakland Youth Development Center, there were a lot of local neighborhood people who did a lot of work to get that going; they knocked on doors, they wined and dined the businessmen on the street and got their support. . . . Yet when they had the ceremony on opening day, it was the corporate people that got all the credit; they were in the spotlight, but they should have acknowledged those people that really put their all into the thing."



Construction and use — Brookfield Tennis Courts, 98th Avenue and B Street Courts



"We campaigned to people to get the absentee landlords to get their houses fixed up. We'd meet on their front lawn. . . . We'd caravan to their houses, and we'd talk to their neighbors. It worked because we wanted to see our community brought up to a better standard."

"Since CD has been around, the most positive thing that has happened is that we have helped the business area; we put in a median strip using Community Development dollars. It's the only area of the City that has a median strip and the people here are really progressive thinking."

"The biggest victory is community participation; citizen involvement."

"The major accomplishment of CD is to really

be able to advise the decision makers and to have that advice sincerely considered. . . . We actually do formulate policy for the City of Oakland. . . . We have the strength to solve problems."

"When we started with the free paint program, nobody would believe that the federal government would give you anything for free. Then this one family got their paint and they were out painting their house, and everyone would come around to see what they were doing and said that their house looked so nice and asked them, where did you get the paint? And they said it was free from the City, so it was a starting point. They were so happy about it, and it just spread."

"Where there is organization, you can't help but go forward and I felt that with all these neighborhood organizations, being members of the district board and then the district board gets all this input, then carries it to the Community Development. I think it's better than the poverty program, which I think was a fiasco, and a boondoggle of the first magnitude. But the district board and CD concept was a master stroke, terrific. . . . It has helped the neighborhoods and has helped the people to become more aware because you do things; streets become worked on and repaired, and you get more consideration when you go downtown about somebody who has this



Tyrone Carney Park activity, Verdese Carter Park



rundown house, and of the resources available.”

“I am an urban homesteader. I wanted to move in by Christmas and that meant only a month and a half to get things done. We got in just on Christmas Eve. I always lived in a house and I never got used to living in an apartment and I knew that this was the only way I’d ever get a house. I was going to hang in there and go through as many lotteries as I had to. The thing that frustrated me the most was the bureaucracy that you had to go through. Now we’ve organized an urban homesteaders association and we’re trying to cut through the red tape for new people. But I must say, I love my house.”

“I’ve lived in Oakland since I was 10 and where I work, I have a girlfriend and she was telling me about urban homesteading. I went down and signed up because I figured there was no other way I was gonna get me a home. And I got lucky. It’s me and the four kids. I only picked this one house, because it was the one I really liked. It was all beat up and all tore up and raggedy. But it had a lot of potentials and I loved the big back yard. I couldn’t have done it any other way, not with the four kids. It was a good deal, and I couldn’t believe it, and I wanted the house so bad. It changed my whole life. I sometimes heard people talk about CD, about remodeling, but I didn’t have no house, and it didn’t involve me.”

“... so they call me a hell raiser and I hate that name, but it’s just that I cannot stand for them to tell me they’re going to do something and a year later they still haven’t done it.”

“The Black Veteran’s Association feels very strongly about the commitment that they’ve made. The veterans themselves has to grasp what type of oath that they take when they went into the service. We believe in the system strongly enough to come back here and to do something about it. I went out there to bare my chest to the bullet for this country, and I’m coming back saying, there’s got to be change.”

“The spirit and the unified effort of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, you know, is at heart here in Elmhurst.”

Elected Officials

"The city has changed as a result of CD because it has expanded the opportunity for citizen participation far beyond the old Redevelopment Agency."

"CD has done a good job overall working with people, providing supportive services to neighborhoods. It has revitalized and rehabilitated them, with a combination of city services through OCD and with self help input , provided by community people."

"Even if HUD money were to dry up now, people's involvement would not go away; people are involved; they will continue to fight."

"CD has involved the community in decision making that affects that community and brings the community together to understand policy and to be a part of policy making."

"In the long run, human resources and human potential will make a difference in terms of neighborhoods building themselves up."

"Community Development Block Grant money was and is essentially for capital improvements and it has already made substantial impact on neighborhoods in the form of parks, gardens, trees, housing programs, etc. So there are lasting physical remains, but more important is the participation. The people. Making people a part of the decision making in the city . . . that will be the most long lasting effect in Oakland. And Oakland is probably better than most cities in this regard."

"The neighborhoods are more organized and not as haphazard as in the past, and the quality of life has definitely improved here in Oakland through the efforts of CD."

"Of course there are the physical structures put up with CD money that will always remain."

"With the declining tax base, post Proposition 13 financial straits . . . there is little room for new projects, but CD allowed for some new things to happen that couldn't have otherwise."

"The spin-offs are hard to measure, but if you go into a neighborhood and you build a new park, or you improve the streets, provide some

housing loans, that tends to give a shot in the arm to the neighborhood."

"There are lots of spin-offs such as training people to deal with bureaucracy and the political organizations. . . . That's a valuable tool that shouldn't be discounted."

"I think that CD doesn't get enough credit for what it does. Not enough people are informed."

"The city is a collection of neighborhoods, so if you improve the neighborhoods you improve the city."

"The real problem is that CD hasn't reached out enough to grassroots people, and I think that the representation should be broader."

"I think that the Council is just a rubber stamp and that the important decisions are made elsewhere . . . at some staff or Commission level."

"If I ran a program like this from Washington, I would eliminate the complex guidelines and the restrictive strings which impair innovative programs."



Downtown



City Hall



Council Meeting presentation

Eldridge Gonaway

Director, Office of Community Development

“The Office of Community Development was created in 1975. It grew out of the old Redevelopment Agency, which before that time was semi-autonomous — similar to the Port and the Housing Authority. It had a commission, all of whom were appointed by the Mayor and Council. However, with the merger of the activities of the old Redevelopment Agency into the OCD, it became a regular city department.”

“Community Development is noted in Oakland for its strong citizen participation role. Simply stated, citizen participation means people involving themselves and helping to make decisions for areas in which they live. All of the decisions are those that will have a long term effect on their lives, the lives of their children, and in

some way, the future destiny of the city. Therefore, citizen participation has been one of the positive elements to come out of the program. I think some of the other accomplishments realized have been the Urban Homestead Program, in which 100 people have become homeowners who probably would not have ever been homeowners in their lives without this program. Additionally, the Rehab Program, Paint Program, our old Home Repair Program, have provided services that are all visible to over 2,700 Oaklanders. Streets, curbs and gutters may not have moved as rapidly as we all would like. At least some people in some areas that never had these facilities before now have them. We’ve also done fairly nice things with new parks. These kinds of visible accomplishments I feel extremely good about.”

“One of the most disappointing experiences for me and staff has been the unhappiness that a lot of the people feel regarding the expenses, delays and difficulties with their rehabilitation and some of the other physical improvements. I

guess we always appear to be reacting to crisis situations — putting out brush fires, and doing things reflexively — a continuous crisis management plan.”

“We are now going out and employing neighborhood residents to be involved in boarding up and cleaning up of vacant buildings . . . we’re also funding some organizations to provide monetary and fiscal help to minority contractors.”

“People have learned that they can work within the system to get things done. I think that says something about the effectiveness of federal programming because it mandates an active citizen participation.”



Demolition for Hong Kong USA



Industry



Demolition for Hong Kong USA

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Oaklanders working, playing, picnicking, parading, politicking, protesting

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“Oaklanders have spirit and ideas. We’re willing to invest time to make these ideas work. We’re not into big bangs . . . just small whispers. We believe evolution can be dynamic.”



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